Claims

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for removing a removable tooth positioning appliance from teeth of a patient comprising:

a handle portion;

a member extending from the handle portion and having a distal end; and

an engagement block having a tapered edge for engaging an edge of the tooth positioning appliance, the engagement block protruding from the member at or near the distal end.

2. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a stop block protruding from the member so as to form a recess with the engagement block, the recess adapted to receive the edge of the tooth positioning appliance when the tapered edge is being used to remove the tooth positioning appliance from the teeth of the patient.

3. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the engagement block protrudes from the member at an approximately 90 degree angle.

4. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the member comprises a substantially L-shaped section having a vertical portion and a horizontal portion, the distal end being located on the horizontal portion.

5. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the apparatus is constructed of plastic, metal, wood, epoxy, or nylon.

6. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the member has a substantially rectangular cross-section.

7. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the distal end of the member comprises a planar surface.

8. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the tapered edge is tapered away from the distal end.

9. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the tapered edge is tapered toward the distal end.

10. A dental system for positioning teeth comprising:

a removable tooth positioning appliance for aligning teeth of a patient; and

an apparatus comprising a handle portion, a member extending form the handle portion and having a distal end, and an engagement block having a tapered edge for engaging an edge of the tooth positioning appliance, the engagement block protruding from the working portion at or near the distal end.

11. The system of claim 10 wherein the removable tooth positioning appliance is an aligner that fits over a plurality of teeth.

12. The system of claim 11 wherein the apparatus further comprises a stop block protruding from the member so as to form a recess with the engagement block, the recess adapted to receive the edge of the tooth positioning appliance when the tapered edge is used to remove the tooth positioning appliance from the teeth of the patient; the engagement block protruding from the member at an approximately 90 degree angle; the member comprising a substantially L-shaped section having a vertical portion and a horizontal portion, the distal end being located on the horizontal portion; the distal end of the member having a planar surface; and the wherein the tapered edge is tapered toward the distal end.

13. A method of removing a removable tooth positioning appliance from teeth of a patient comprising:

providing an apparatus having a handle portion, a member extending from the handle portion and having a distal end, and an engagement block having a tapered edge, the engagement block protruding from the member at or near the distal end;

positioning the tapered edge of the member near an edge of the tooth positioning appliance;

inserting the tapered edge between the tooth positioning appliance and the teeth of the patient; and

exerting force to the handle portion thereby causing the tooth positioning to release from the teeth of the patient.

14. The method of claim 1 wherein the force exerted to the handle portion is in a direction substantially parallel to the teeth of the patient.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein the apparatus further comprises a stop block protruding from the member so as to form a recess with the engagement block, the recess adapted to receive the edge of the tooth positioning appliance when the tapered edge engages the tooth positioning appliance; the engagement block protruding from the member at an approximately 90 degree angle; the member comprising a substantially L-shaped section having a vertical portion and a horizontal portion, the distal end being located on the horizontal portion; the distal end of the member having a planar surface; and the wherein the tapered end is tapered toward the distal end.